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THE PLUS PROGRAM: *Building Relationships Through Education*

The Partnerships for Learning Undergraduate Studies (PLUS) Program, part of the Partnerships for Learning Initiative (P4L), is the first-ever U.S. Government-sponsored undergraduate scholarship program for outstanding students from the Middle East and North Africa. The PLUS Program provides an opportunity for undergraduate students who are less privileged or live outside of major metropolitan areas to study in the United States for two and a half years. The program was developed by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is administered by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST).

In 2004, 71 students from across North Africa and the Middle East received scholarships to complete the final two years of their university studies in the United States. They represent: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank & Gaza, and Yemen. Students will receive their bachelor's degrees from U.S. institutions in the spring of 2006.

In 2005, the PLUS Program was expanded to include 100 students from the Middle East, North Africa, and countries from the South Asia region,

PLUS AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING

The PLUS Program is one of the newest programs of Partnerships for Learning, an initiative introduced by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to reach out to younger, more diverse audiences. P4L engages youth in dialogue through expanded academic, professional, youth, and cultural exchange programs. The PLUS Program supports the goals of the P4L initiative by:

- Providing educational opportunities for youth who have not had access to such opportunities;
- Working to close the "hope gap" among youth;
- Creating a positive agenda for cooperation with; and
- Strengthening the capacity of future leaders to drive economic and societal development.

including: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Selection

Students are nominated by U.S. embassies through locally administered competitions or through Fulbright Commissions. The PLUS students are then selected by an impartial panel of experts based on their academic achievement, leadership potential, diversity of experience, and commitment to their home region.

The Program

Students begin their experience with up to six months of intensive English-language training and pre-academic preparation. This

includes home-stay opportunities and cultural enrichment activities that introduce the students to American culture, society, and values. PLUS students then enroll in universities across the United States to complete two years

of study and obtain Bachelor's degrees. Students participate in extracurricular activities on campus and in the local community, on clubs and teams ranging from debate to football to international affairs. ■



Maysa Gayyusi, PLUS Morocco, meets Montana State's Provost David Dooley and President Geoffrey Gamble.

For more information about the PLUS Program or the more than 30,000 individuals who participate in Department of State Educational and Cultural Affairs programs annually, please visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/>